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JAPAN
Jan. 28, 1954MISSING SOVIET MISSION OFFICIAL SOUGHT

Tokyo, KYODO, in Japanese and English, Jan. 28, 1954, 0600 GMT--T

(Text)

Tokyo, Jan. 28--Japanese police today were searching for a second secretary of the unrecognized Soviet mission in Tokyo, reported missing since Jan. 24. Police began to hunt for Yuri Rastzorov, 34, yesterday in answer to a request made by an official of the mission the same day. In making the search request to the metropolitan police, the Soviet official said Rastzorov may be suffering from a mental breakdown.

Police avoided making an immediate reply to the Soviet official since diplomatic relations have not yet been restored with Soviet Russia and delicate diplomatic issues are involved. After conferring with Foreign Office officials yesterday, MPB authorities decided to carry out the search for humanitarian reasons. The missing secretary was still missing this morning. When last seen Rastzorov was reported to have been wearing a grey suit and blue overcoat. He has been in Japan for more than 3 years but his family is in Russia. Rastzorov's passport number was reported to be 00863.

In connection with the case of the missing diplomat, Shizuhiko Yamamoto, chief of the third section of MPB public safety section, declared he could not say whether Rastzorov escaped for political reasons.

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Hajime Suzuki, chief of the Immigration Board, meanwhile said last night that if it is ascertained that Rastzorov is a political refugee, Japan will be able to grant sanctuary to him in accordance with international custom.

A spokesman for the Soviet mission, when approached yesterday, stated he had not seen the second secretary either yesterday or the day before but refused to comment on whether he was regarded as missing or not. Metropolitan police as of this noon were still unable to locate Pastzorov.

Police feared the missing Soviet diplomat may attempt to commit suicide since he was said to be suffering from a nervous breakdown, although it was also presumed that he had only fled. Rastzorov was described as a good-looking man, 172 centimeters tall. According to police, he came to Japan during the occupation as a member of the Soviet diplomatic service and enjoyed quite a high status in the defunct mission since he was an intelligence man. He is believed to have guided the activities of Radio Operator Masao Mitsuhashi and other repatriates from Soviet Russia who had worked for the Soviets. Mitsuhashi made headlines last year in connection with the spy case centering around the leftist critic Wataru Kaji.

Meanwhile, an official of the unrecognized Soviet mission said today he did not believe political motives were involved in Rastzorov's disappearance. The official, who asked that his name be withheld, told KYODO that since Rastzorov's family remains in Soviet Russia, it is unthinkable that he sought political asylum in Japan. He added the missing secretary was suffering from a sort of nervous breakdown, which might have prompted him into leaving the mission on a sudden impulse.

Asked what steps the mission will take if Rastzorov is found, the officials said they will welcome him back warmly. He added that probably no punishment would be meted out to him. He declined to comment, however, when asked whether they will take steps to send the secretary home. The official said Rastzorov was discovered missing on the afternoon of Jan. 24.

The Metropolitan Police Board was requested to search for him since the Soviet mission did not know where he had gone, the official said. He added that Rastzorov knew a little Japanese.